

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 05568 151427 Z

43

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-12 ADP-00 CIAE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10

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R 151335 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2140

DIA

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USCINCEUR

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 5568

DEPT PASS USINT CAIRO

E. O. 11652: XGDS

TAGS: PINT LE

SUBJ: INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION

SUMMARY: OVER PAST FEW DAYS EMPHASIS OF GOL- FEDAYEEN CRISIS HAS SHIFTED FROM ARMED CONFRONTATION TO POLITICAL STRUGGLE FOR SUPPORT OF SUNNI MOSLEMS. ' ARAFAT AND JUMBLATT HAVE BEEN LEADING EXPONENTS OF FEDAYEEN POSITION AND HAVE ATTRACTED CONSIDERABLE FOLLOWING AMONG SUNNI POLITICIANS WITH WHOM THEY HAVE BEEN HAVING ALMOST CONTINUOUS MEETINGS. FRANGIE, ON OTHER HAND, ALSO MEETING WITH SUNNI LEADERS TO EXPOUND HIS WELL- KNOWN
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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 05568 151427 Z

POINT OF VIEW. AMONG ISSUES AT STAKE ARE FORMATION OF NEW GOVT, CONTINUATION OF STATE OF EMERGENCY, CONTENT OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN GOL AND FEDAYEEN, AND " RIGHTS" OF MOSLEMS. FRANGIE HAS BEEN HOLDING VERY FIRM, AND SUNNI BASE REMAINS RELATIVELY QUIET BEUT SUNNI POLITICIANS ARE BEHAVING IN TRADITIONAL FASHION BY PUBLIC ADVOCACY OF PALESTINIAN, PAN- ARAB CAUSE. END SUMMARY.

1. OVER PAST THREE DAYS PRESIDENT FRANGIE HAS CONTINUED HOLD ONE MEETING AFTER ANOTHER WITH WIDE SELECTION OF POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS AND BUSINESS LEADERS. AMONG THEM HAVE BEEN LARGE NUMBER SUNNI MOSLEMS. HE HAS BEEN REPORTEDLY HOLDING VERY FIRMLY TO HIS PREVIOUSLY STATED VIEWS ON WHAT RELATIONSHIP SHOULD BE BETWEEN FEDAYEEN AND GOL, CALLING PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO SITUATION IN OTHER ARAB STATES AND TO HIS STRONG OPPOSITION TO IDEA OF HAVING ARMED MEN CIRCULATING FREELY, TO FEDAYEEN BEING ABOVE LEBANESE LAW (" STATE WITHIN A STATE"), AND THREAT TO LEBANESE GOVT AND PEOPLE CAUSED BY HEAVY WEAPONS IN CAMPS IN AND AROUND MAJOR CITIES. IN TALKING WITH BUSINESSMEN HE IS RELIABLY REPORTED TO HAVE SAID " WE MUST THINK LEBANON BEFORE WE THINK ARAB AND PALESTINIAN". WHEN ASKED TO ABOLISH CURFEW WHICH HURTING BUSINESS HE IS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID THAT SUCH LOSSES ARE " RELATIVELY SECONDARY, AND NOT THE IMPORTANT FACTOR."

2. IN TALKING WITH FORMER PRIME MINISTER SAEB SALAM ON MAY 13, PRESIDENT RELIABLY REPORTED TO HAVE TAKEN VERY TOUGH LINE. SAEB CAME FROM MEETING OF SOME TWENTY SUNNI POLITICIANS AND BUSINESSMEN (EXCLUDING THOSE CLOSEST TO KARAME AND JUMBLATT) AND CLAIMED HE REPRESENTING SUNNI OPINION IN PRESSING FOR RAPID RESTORATION OF CIVILIAN GOVT AND AGREEMENT WITH FEDAYEEN ON BASIS OLD CAIRO ACCORDS. FRANGIE REPORTEDLY SIAD THAT SETTling QUESTION OF RELATIONS WITH FEDAYEEN SHOULD COME BEFORE NEW GOVT SINCE OTHERWISE NEW GOVT WOULD FALL INTO SAME TROUBLE AS HAD AMIN EL HAFEZ. HE ALSO REPORTEDLY TOLD SAEB SALAM THAT IF HE THAT ENAMoured OF FEDAYEEN HE COULD MOVE INTO CAMPS WITH THEM BUT THAT FRANGIE WOULD NEVER CONCEDE LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY EVEN IF CONFRONTATION STEMming THEREFROM LED TO ACTUAL GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISION OF COUNTRY IN WHICH SUNIS AND PALESTINIANS WOULD HAVE SEPARATE ENCLAVE. IN PRESIDENT' S MEETING MAY 14 WITH KAMAL JUMBLATT AND RACHID KARAME, WE CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BEIRUT 05568 151427 Z

UNDERSTAND THAT FORMER TOOK HIS USUAL FIRM STAND WHILE LATTER TWO REPEATED ESSENCE OF KARAME' S PRESENTATION PREVIOUS WEEK (SEE SITREP 15).

3. ' ARAFAT HAS MET SEVERAL TIME WITH SAEB SALAM, KARAME AND JUMBLATT OVER PAST THREE DAYS, AND ALSO WITH BROAD SPECTRUM OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS, ETC. WHILE BOTH FRANGIE AND

' ARAFAT (WITH STRONG SUPPORT FROM KARAME AND JUMBLATT)
CONCENTRATING ON SUNNI MOSLEMS, THEY NOT NEGLECTING CHRISTIANS.
' ARAFAT GETTING STRONG PROPAGANDA SUPPORT FROM RADIOS IN
DAMASCUS, CAIRO, BAGHDAD, ETC. (GOOD SAMPLE OF MILDLY-
WORDED SUPPORT CAN BE READ IN FBIS M142042 Z QUOTING CAIRO
VOICE OF PALESTINE).

4. COMMENT: ONE EFFECT OF THESE MEETINGS HAS CLEARLY
BEEN TO HEIGHTEN CONFESSIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS ON PART OF
SUNNIS. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE OF SUNNI POLITICIANS, BUT WE
HAVE SEVERAL REPORTS THAT THERE IS INCREASING FALL- OUT AMONG
SUNNI RANK- AND- FILAI(WHICH BEING VISITED ON ALMOSLPHOUSE- TO-
HOUSE BASIS IN SOME SECTORS BY FEDAYEEN REPS). THERE IS
APPREHENSION THAT UNLEESS CRISIS IS RESOLVED SOON ANY OUT-
BREAK OF HOSTILITIES COULD PRODUCE CONFESSIONAL SPLIT WHICH HAS THUS
FAR BEEN AVOIDED. ONE OF MAJOR REASONS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DID
NOT MEET ON MAY 14 WAS DESIRE BY CHRISTIAN DEPUTIES NOT TO HAVE
MEETING IN WHICH THERE WAS NO RPT NO SUNNI SUPPORT FOR EXTENDING
STATE OF EMERGENCY. THIS INCREASES PRESSURE FOR COMPROMISE BY
FRANGIE AND FOR FORMATION NEW GOVT (OR RESURRECTION OF SOME-
WHAT BEDRAGGLED AMIN EL HAFEZ) PRIOR TO CONCLUSION UNDERSTANDING
WITH FEDAYEEN. LATTER ARE APPARENTLY ADDING
TO THIS PRESSURE BY IMPLYING THEY CANNOT AGREE TO ANYTHING
IN ABSENCE OF SUNNI PM. ON OTHER HAND, FRANGIE' S FIRM
STAND MAY BRING HOME TO MANY SUNNIS AMONG UPPER AND
MIDDLE CLASSES THAT THEY HAVE A LOT TO LOSE MATERIALLY IN
PUSHING THEIR PAN- ARAB, PRO- PALESTINIAN SENTIMENTS TOO
FAR. FRANGIE HAS THUS FAR PURSUED WITH SKILL AND COURAGE
HIS OWN VARIETY OF BRINKSMANSHIP.
HOUGHTON

NOTE BY OC/ T: NOT PASSED CAIRO.

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